United Nations A/55/402

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 September 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 84
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General*

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 54/72 of 6 December 1999.

2. The report includes the substance of responses from Member States and United Nations agencies to the appeal contained in that resolution, together with reference to further action taken by Member States and United Nations agencies in response to the appeal contained in General Assembly resolutions 32/90 F of 13 December 1977, 33/112 C of 18 December 1978, 34/52 C of 23 November 1979, 35/13 B of 3 November 1980, 36/146 H of 16 December 1981, 37/120 D of 16 December 1982, 38/83 D of 15 December 1983, 39/99 D of 14 December 1984, 40/165 D of 16 December 1985, 41/69 D of 3 December 1986, 42/69 D of 2 December 1987, 43/57 D of 6 December 1988, 44/47 D of 8 December 1989, 45/73 D of 11 December 1990, 46/46 D of 9 December 1991, 47/69 D of 14 December 1992, 48/40 D of 10 December 1993, 49/35 D of 9 December 1994, 50/28 D of 6 December 1995, 51/127 of 13 December 1996, 52/60 of 10 December 1997 and 53/49 of 3 December 1998. By these resolutions, the Assembly appealed to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to augment special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees; invited the relevant specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue, within their respective spheres of competence, to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students; and requested the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to act as the recipient and trustee for such special allocations for grants and scholarships and to award them to qualified refugee candidates.

* Replies from Member States and organizations were received after 1 September 2000.

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3. In fiscal year 2000, the Government of Japan awarded 12 fellowships through UNRWA to Palestine refugees who were employed by UNRWA as vocational training staff at the eight vocational training centres in UNRWA's area of operations. These were processed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). A review of this programme from the date of its inception in 1985 until 2000 shows that a total of 175 scholarships were offered by the Government of Japan, of which 163 have been processed. In 1989, the Government of Japan contributed $1 million towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. The recipients were Palestine refugee students from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Between 1993 and 1999, 148 students graduated from this programme in a wide range of disciplines, while 14 students were still pursuing their university studies in the academic year 1999/2000. The Government of Japan contributed an additional $400,000 in each of the years 1992, 1993 and 1994, $500,000 in 1995 and $600,000 in each of the years 1996 and 1997, to be spent over a five-year period, towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates from UNRWA's area of operations. The recipients were Palestine refugee students. In 1998, the Government of Japan contributed $71,000 to the university scholarship programme. This contribution was used in 1998/99 to cover the costs of the awards for 111 continuing students, out of the 154 hitherto funded by the UNRWA General Fund budget, the funding of which had been frozen owing to the financial problems facing UNRWA. Funding of the awards for the remaining 43 scholars was covered from savings from previous Japanese contributions realized as a consequence of the early graduation of some students and the failure of others. In 1999, owing to the cancellation of the portion of the university scholarship fund that had been financed from UNRWA's General Fund budget, and the fact that funding from donors to finance the subprogramme was not forthcoming, UNRWA's Education Department used funds already available from the Japanese contribution to finance the studies of most of the students through their graduation. A total of 471 recipients participated in the programme in the scholastic year 1999/2000, while 227 students graduated and 15 failed in the period 1995-1999. These awards, while not specifically provided in response to the General Assembly resolution, are in keeping with its spirit and intention.

4. The Government of Switzerland contributed $1,703,581 between 1989 and 1996 and an additional $338,000 in 1997 to the UNRWA scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. Of the 315 students who benefited from part of the 1997 Swiss contribution for one year only, 67 graduated in 1998, 7 failed and 87 were granted scholarships in 1998/99 from savings realized from previous Swiss contributions, while the remaining 154 continuing students were financed in 1998/99 from other sources (see para. 3). In 1999, owing to the cancellation of a portion of the university scholarship fund financed from UNRWA's General Fund budget and the fact that financing was not forthcoming from donors to fund the subprogramme, UNRWA's Education Department used funds already available from the Swiss contribution to finance the graduation of the majority of students. The number of students from the five fields in UNRWA's area of operations who were still pursuing their university studies in the academic year 1999/2000 was 188, including 19 who benefited from part of the 1997 Swiss contribution. Between 1993 and 1999, 255 students graduated and 2 students failed.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as part of its long-standing agreement with UNRWA and within the framework of its regular programme of scholarships for Palestinians, granted 25 scholarships (21 to male and 4 to female students) during the biennium 1999/2000.

6. In 1999/2000, the World Health Organization (WHO) provided a total of 55 fellowships/study tours for qualified Palestinian candidates in various specializations totalling 73 months of study, all of which have been processed.

7. The United World Colleges (UWC) have now established their own selection committee in the area and did not offer any scholarships through UNRWA for the school year 1997/98. One scholarship was offered for 1998/99 and one for 1999/2000 by Lester B. Pearson, UWC of the Pacific, of Canada, and was processed. A further scholarship was offered for 2000/01 and is being processed.